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Hunter Highlights

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What Every Arizona Hunter Should Know About Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic wasting disease—CWD—is a brain and nervous system disease that is fatal to cervids, including deer and elk. It belongs to a family of diseases known as prion diseases. Other prion diseases are mad cow disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep. Signs of CWD in deer and elk include low weight, stumbling gait, drooping ears, rough hair condition, visible salivation, excessive thirst and loss of fear of humans.

How is it spread? Is it dangerous to humans?

Scientists believe the disease may be spread both by animal-to-animal contact and by soil or other surfaces to animal. It is thought that the most common mode of transmission is via saliva and feces.

There is no evidence that CWD affects humans, according to both the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public health officials do recommend, however, that human exposure to CWD-affected deer and elk be avoided as research continues.

Is CWD in Arizona?

No, but the disease has been discovered in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and other states in the West and Midwest. The Arizona Game and Fish Department is concerned that CWD might be introduced through transport of infected deer or elk tissue and has banned the importation of live cervids into our state.

What is the Arizona Game and Fish Department doing about CWD?

Surveillance and training

The department has been conducting surveillance using hunter-harvested deer and elk since 1998. The department has sampled more than 3,500 animals and has found no evidence of CWD.



Don't harvest any animal that appears to be sick, very thin or that behaves oddly.

Training personnel to recognize signs of CWD

The department has trained all staff members to recognize animals with clinical signs of CWD.

Restricting movement of live deer and elk

There is evidence that movement of live deer and elk is related to the spread of CWD. To minimize the risk, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission has adopted rules to restrict the movement of deer and elk into or within the state, and to require marking and testing of captive deer and elk, and for the notification of the department when non-native deer species such as axis deer are being held.

Learn more about CWD in Arizona on the Internet at azgfd.gov/cwd.

WHEN YOU HUNT ...

- Don't harvest any animal that appears to be sick, very thin or that behaves oddly.
- If you hunt in another state, don't bring back the brain, intact skull or spinal cord. It's OK to bring back hides and skull plates that have been cleaned of all tissue and washed in bleach.
- If you intend to hunt out of state, contact the wildlife agency in the area you intend to hunt. Several states have regulations on carcass movement.
- Taxidermied heads, sawn-off antlers and ivory teeth are OK to bring home.
- Call the Arizona Game and Fish Department if you see an animal with signs of sickness that you think could be CWD. Call 1-800-352-0700.



Your purchases of hunting and fishing gear support wildlife management in Arizona.